

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 09884 151811Z
ACTION EUR-12

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5081
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PDEV, UK
SUBJECT: DEVOLUTION: NO FURTHER ACTION THIS SESSION

REF: LONDON 9300

SUMMARY - THE GOVERNMENT JUNE 14 ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD
TAKE NO FURTHER ACTION ON DEVOLUTION IN THIS SESSION OF
PARLIAMENT, BUT PROMISED A NEW BILL ESTABLISHING ELECTED
ASSEMBLIES IN SCOTLAND AND WALES EARLY IN THE NEXT SES-
SION. THIS ANNOUNCEMENT WAS NOT UNEXPECTED' BUT WILL
PROBABLY CAUSE INCREASED CONCERN IN BOTH SCOTLAND AND
WALES. THE GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, IS HOPEFUL THAT IT CAN
DEVELOP A WORKABLE BILL OVER THE SUMMER AND FIND THE
NEEDED MAJORITY TO PASS IT. END SUMMARY

1. LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS MICHAEL FOOT JUNE 14
TOLD PARLIAMENT THAT GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED NOT TO
INTRODUCE A REVISED DEVOLUTION BILL DURING THE CURRENT
SESSION OF PARLIAMENT. FOOT, HOWEVER, STRONGLY RE-
AFFIRMED THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO DEVOLUTION AND
PROMISED TO INTRODUCE NEW LEGISLATION TO DEVOLVE POWER
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PAGE 02 LONDON 09884 151811Z

TO ELECTED ASSEMBLIES IN SCOTLAND AND WALES EARLY IN THE
NEW SESSION WHICH BEGINS IN NOVEMBER.

2. IN REPLYING TO QUESTIONS, FOOT TOLD LIBERAL LEADER
DAVID STEEL THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD TRY TO MAKE A
"SUBSTANTIVE" STATEMENT ON DEVOLUTION BEFORE THE SUMMER
RECESS. HE ALSO INDICATED THE GOVERNMENT: WOULD CON-

TINUE ITS DISCUSSIONS WITH THE VARIOUS PARTIES; HAD THE QUESTION OF TAX POWERS FOR THE ASSEMBLIES UNDER STUDY; AND WAS CONSIDERING INTRODUCTION OF SEPARATE BILLS FOR SCOTLAND AND WALES. HE ALSO SAID THERE WOULD BE NO REFERENDUM ON THE DEVOLUTION ISSUE PRIOR TO PASSAGE OF A BILL AND FLATLY REJECTED THE CONSERVATIVE CALL FOR AN ALL PARTY CONFERENCE ON DEVOLUTION. THE LATTER, HE SAID, WAS A "DEVICE FOR DOING NOTHING" AND NOTED THAT THE TORIES HAD REFUSED TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT'S EARLIER SUGGESTION THAT THE BILL BE REFERRED TO A COMMONS SELECT COMMITTEE.

3. COMMENT: WE HAD EARLIER BEEN TOLD THAT ANY ACTION ON DEVOLUTION THIS SESSION WAS HIGHLY UNLIKELY, AND FEW OBSERVERS HAD EXPECTED THE GOVERNMENT TO MOVE BEFORE NEXT SESSION. NEVERTHELESS, THE ANNOUNCEMENT COULD TRIGGER SOME ADVERSE REACTION IN THE TWO REGIONS, AND THE NATIONALIST PARTIES CAN BE EXPECTED TO DO THEIR BEST TO EXPLOIT THIS DEVELOPMENT.

4. IT HAS BEEN CLEAR FOR SOME TIME THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO SOLVE THE DEVOLUTION DILEMMA. HOWEVER, FOOT'S DEPUTY FOR DEVOLUTION MATTERS, JOHN SMITH, HAS REPORTED SOME PROGRESS IN GAINING SUPPORT OF CONSERVATIVE PRO-DEVOLUTIONISTS. WITH THEIR SUPPORT AND THAT OF THE LIBERALS, THE 29-VOTE DEFICIT IN THE CLOTURE VOTE LAST FEBRUARY HAS NEARLY BEEN CLOSED. THE MAJOR REMAINING PROBLEM LIES WITH THE ANTI-DEVOLUTION LABOR MPS. ACCORDING TO SMITH (AND OUR OWN SOUNDINGS), LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LONDON 09884 151811Z

THEY HAVE DUG IN. AND MOST ANY CONCESSION WHICH WOULD GUARANTY THE SUPPORT OF A FEW OF THE ANTI-DEVOLUTIONISTS WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY ALIENATE AN EQUAL OR LARGER NUMBER OF LABOR BACKBENCHERS WHO SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT'S ORIGINAL BILL.

BREWSTER

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Message Attributes

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Sent Date: 15-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
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